

## **FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** October 17, 2018

**Agenda Item:** Canyon Creek WMA Cartan & Palmquist Additions (R3)

**Bureau:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

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### **Background:**

FWP is seeking commission approval to acquire two additions to the Canyon Creek WMA: 1) the Cartan addition would add approximately 229 acres of important wildlife habitat to the WMA (+/- 59-acres between the Mill Creek Unit and Hwy 279 and +/- 170 acres 1.25 miles south of the WMA, total appraised value of \$470,000); and 2) the Palmquist addition would add approximately 6 acres between the Mill Creek Unit and the highway (appraised value of \$7,857/acre, actual acreage to be surveyed). The primary goal of both projects is to ensure the ecological integrity of the WMA while conserving wildlife habitats that extend beyond the bounds of the WMA. Two of the three parcels under consideration would establish a new WMA boundary against the Lincoln Road (Highway 279), avoiding potential development that could otherwise directly impact the WMA's habitat and recreation values. These parcels, like the existing Canyon Creek WMA, would provide hunting opportunity for mule deer and elk; winter range for mule deer and moose; and spring, summer and fall range for all three of these big game species. In addition, the entire suite of carnivores, grizzly and black bear, wolves, Canada lynx, wolverine, bobcat, etc., use the area. Acquisition would further protect a stream corridor while also providing increased angler access, providing additional fishing opportunity for brook trout and rainbow trout in Canyon Creek.

The properties are located within the focus area of the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, which applies funds – originally derived from the sale of Canyon Ferry cabin-site leases – to land conservation and public access, with an emphasis on projects in the upper Missouri River drainage. MFWCT would be the primary funding source for the projects.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results:**

FWP completed a 30-day public comment period on the draft EAs. A public hearing was held on September 20. Two individuals who commented during the hearing also provided written comments. A total of nine individuals and organizations indicated support for FWP to acquire the Cartan parcels. One individual registered opposition to FWP acquiring the 178-acre Cartan parcel. A total of eight individuals and organizations indicated support for FWP to acquire the Palmquist property; no opposition was expressed for this particular acquisition.

### **Alternatives and Analysis:**

The options are to either purchase one or more of the parcels or to not purchase them. If FWP forgoes purchase of the parcels, there is the possibility of development on these areas, which could negatively affect habitat productivity and public recreation opportunity on these and adjacent WMA habitats.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale:**

FWP recommends the commission approve acquisition of the Cartan and Palmquist additions to the Canyon Creek WMA, to conserve valuable wildlife habitat and public recreational opportunities on the subject parcels and on the adjacent WMA.

### **Proposed Motion:**

I move the commission approve acquisition of the Cartan and Palmquist additions to Canyon Creek WMA.